

Marathon battle brewing to alter Olympic designs

By Roger Boye

Hobby experts are advising the Reagan administration to revise the designs on special Olympic coins to avert a potential sales disaster.

"We don't need any more Susan B. Anthony coins in this country, but I'm deeply afraid that is exactly what we will be doing unless the designs are changed," said U.S. Rep. Frank Annunzio [D., Ill.], chairman of the House Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and Coinage.

Earlier this year, Annunzio championed legislation authorizing production of three types of coins [a \$10 gold piece dated 1984 and silver dollars dated 1983 and 1984] commemorating the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. If the United States Mint sells all of the special coins it is permitted to make in the next two years, the U.S. and Los Angeles Olympic committees would receive \$600 million from the profits.

"I'm still delighted with the legislation and hope the American people will participate in the coin sale," Annunzio said on Oct. 28 between campaign stops in Chicago. "But the symbols [on the coins] need to be much sharper."

Treasury Department executives unveiled preliminary sketches of all three designs during a mid-October news conference in Washington, D.C. The illustration garnering much criticism shows two Olympic torch runners on the \$10 gold piece.

In a letter to Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, Annunzio dubbed the design as "Dick and Jane with the Olympic torch," adding that the depiction did not lend a "suitable aura for the United States' re-entry into the gold coin field." [The country last made \$10 gold pieces in 1933.] Under the law, Regan is to select designs for the three commemoratives.

Editors of Numismatic News, a weekly hobby newspaper, also lambasted the gold-coin sketch, but they thought the 1984 silver dollar should win the booby prize. That coin, which depicts a sculpture to be built in front of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, "reminds us of the underside of a B-52 as it flies overhead," said a newspaper editorial.

The News even debunked the depiction of a discus thrower on the 1983 silver dollar.

"It is the same discus thrower—in virtually the same location on the coin—that appears on a 1978 Russian Olympic 150-ruble coin," the News added.

U.S. Treasurer Angela Buchanan has promised that artists already have made modifications and that other adjustments are forthcoming.

Annunzio's subcommittee will ask several coinage experts to critique the designs during hearings in Washington, tentatively scheduled for Dec. 1.